

# Watching Organizational Opinion via Social Tagging

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Our collective understanding of the world around us is largely constructed upon what others think. We trust our neighbors more than strangers. We know things because we have either seen them ourselves or because we have it "on good information".

On an individual level, the process of keeping track of what your neighbors' opinions are has largely been a cognitive exercise. Few of us took the time to document the opinions of our peers and acquaintances - much less analyze that documentation for patterns or correlations. With the advent of social tagging, this collective opinion can be inexpensively visualized and reflected upon, counted and analyzed.

Tagging data can be viewed as a marker for the pulse of an organization. With the proper visualizations and training, social tagging could become the most powerful information organization and management tool available.

The tagging triumvirate consists of the person doing the tagging, the term being applied, and the object being tagged. What is usually forgotten is the fact that the tagging event happens at a certain time. Tracking how the tagging practices of an organization or group change over time can deliver valuable insight into what the organization is doing and thinking.

If the object being tagged is explicitly restricted to someone's performance or expertise, a very interesting dataset could be collected quickly. What a group thinks someone is good at, while subjective, could be counted.

Perhaps more interesting is the potential for seeing the time-lapsed tagging behavior around a collection of people's expertise. Entire groups of talent could be analyzed as a whole with careful consideration given to the points in time where learning and understanding were apparently happening.

Building on earlier work from Cloudalicio.us, this visualization technique could afford an organization new insight into how it understands its own membership.